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SUBJECT: MONTENEGRO'S EU APPLICATION MOVES FORWARD

REF: PODGORICA 13

[¶1.](#) (U) After months of press speculation as to why Montenegro's December 15 application for membership had not yet been considered by the EU, the GoM got good news this week that the process is again moving forward. On April 23, the European Council announced that it would pass the application on to the European Commission (for an "avis"), which can now formally begin evaluating Montenegro's membership request. This decision was greeted enthusiastically by Montenegrin media and political leaders. EU Enlargement Commissioner Olli Rehn also praised Montenegro's reforms to date, stressing the constructive and stabilizing role Montenegro has been playing in the region.

[¶2.](#) (SBU) According to its own regulations, the European Commission was supposed to respond within 60 days of the December 15th application. Our European colleagues in Podgorica tell us the delay was due to internal EU bureaucratic issues and was not a reflection on Montenegro (though it may indicate a general lack of enthusiasm for enlargement).

[¶3.](#) (SBU) The EC will now debate the merits of the application and should send the GoM a list of approximately 4,500 questions to gauge Montenegro's current reform progress. The GoM will have three months to reply. The EC will then produce a comprehensive report on Montenegro and make a recommendation on whether to accept Montenegro's candidacy. The entire back and forth process typically takes a year to eighteen months. If the EC recommendation is positive (our EU colleagues in Podgorica expect that it will be), EU member states will formally accept Montenegro as a "candidate for membership" and set a date to begin accession talks.

MOORE